



Swimming Safety

A review of swimming mishaps show a variety of factors contributes to the typical mishap. Too many people mistakenly consider themselves skilled swimmers, and therefore safe from the possibility of an accident. Seldom do they consider the consequences of cold water, sudden immersion, waves, currents, alcohol and fatigue. Overestimation of ability and underestimation of the effects of such conditions are the leading causes of drownings and disabling injuries. Alcohol and swimming accidents go hand in hand. Alcohol lessens alertness and the sense of balance that are crucial to accident-free swimming. This can occur with as little as one or two drinks.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Assessing the risks along with making risk decisions and implementing controls to eliminate swimming mishaps are as follows:

- a. Learn to swim well enough to survive an emergency.
- b. Always swim with a buddy who has the ability to help you in an emergency.
- c. Swim only in supervised areas.
- d. Follow the safety rules for the particular pool or beach area. Pay attention to warnings about local hazards such as currents.
- e. Know your limitations and don't overestimate your ability.
- f. Stay out of the water when overheated, immediately after eating, and during an electrical storm.
- g. Check the water depth before diving into the water.
- h. Keep a safe distance from diving boards and platforms.
- i. Don't substitute inflated tubes, air mattresses or other artificial supports for swimming ability. If a flotation device is needed as a safety aid, use a U.S. Coast Guard approved personal flotation device.
- j. Learn the simple and safe reaching-rescue techniques. Only certified lifeguards should dive in to rescue a drowning victim.
- k. Avoid overexposure to the sun. Use plenty of sunscreen lotion.